

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 2-20 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 21-43 are added. The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claim 1. (Original) A method for tenderizing meat, said method comprising contacting meat with a tenderizing-effective amount of a protease having limited substrate specificity, wherein said limited substrate specificity is the digestion of only one of the two major protein components of meat; and wherein said protease has been treated to render said protease more thermolabile.

Claims 2-20 (Cancelled)

Claim 21. (New) A method for tenderizing meat, said method comprising contacting meat with a tenderizing-effective amount of a thermolabile protease rendered thermolabile by chemical treatment of the native enzyme.

Claim 22. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease has a limited substrate specificity.

Claim 23. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is derived from a Rhizomucor species.

Claim 24. (New) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said Rhizomucor species is R. miehei.

Claim 25. (New) A method as defined in claim 4, wherein said protease is treated with peroxy acids prior to said contacting.

Claim 26. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is derived from a mammal.

Claim 27. (New) A method as defined in claim 6, wherein said mammal is bovine.

Claim 28. (New) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein said protease is chymosin.

Claim 29. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is obtained from a recombinant host cell transformed with a nucleic acid encoding said protease.

Claim 30. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 50% and about 90% of said meat prior to tenderization.

Claim 31. (New) A method as defined in claim 10, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 60% and about 80% of said meat prior to tenderization.

Claim 32. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said contacting comprises injection or marination.

Claim 33. (New) A method as defined in claim 12, further comprising tumbling said meat.

Claim 34. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat is contacted with said protease at a ratio of between about 0.001 and about 0.05 AU/g meat.

Claim 35. (New) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat is selected from the group consisting of fresh meat, frozen meat, freeze-dried meat, and restructured meat.

Claim 36. (New) A meat tenderizing composition comprising a tenderizing-effective amount of (i) a protease rendered thermolabile by chemical treatment of the native enzyme; and (ii) one more flavoring agents.

Claim 37. (New) A composition as defined in claim 36, wherein said protease has a limited substrate specificity.

Claim 38. (New) A composition as defined in claim 36, wherein said protease is derived from a Rhizomucor species.

Claim 39. (New) A composition as defined in claim 38, wherein said Rhizomucor species is Rhizomucor miehei.